

HCS HB 2472 -- JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Franklin

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill modifies the Joint Committee on MO HealthNet to create a permanent Joint Committee on Public Assistance. The committee must have as its purpose the study of the efficacy of public assistance programs within the state, determine the resources needed to continue and improve the programs, and develop recommendations on how to promote independence from safety-net programs among recipients as may be appropriate. The committee must receive and obtain information from the departments of Social Services, Mental Health, Health and Senior Services, Elementary and Secondary Education, and any other department as applicable, regarding projected enrollment growth, budgetary matters, and any other information deemed relevant to the committee's purpose. Such departments must annually submit a written report to the committee providing data and statistics regarding the caseloads of employees involved in the administration of public assistance programs. The committee must meet at least twice a year. A portion of the meeting must be set aside for public testimony. The committee is authorized to hire staff and enter into employment contracts, including an executive director, to conduct special reviews or investigations of the state's public assistance programs. The committee must also conduct an annual rolling five-year forecast of the state's public assistance programs and make recommendations to the General Assembly.

The bill also repeals a section of law relating to a rolling five-year MO HealthNet forecast conducted by the Legislative Budget Office.

This bill is similar to SB 854 and SB 688 (2016).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the goal is to reduce dependency and promote independence from safety-net programs for individuals receiving public assistance. The committee can hire dedicated staff which will allow a deeper investigation into all of Missouri's public assistance programs. The integration of services is very important and is something the committee could look into. Missouri needs to determine how much money is being spent and whether the money is going to the truly needy. The committee will allow the development of a more holistic approach to public assistance in Missouri.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Franklin; Logan Pike, The Heartland Institute; and Empower Missouri.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.